AN UNDESERVING BEGGAR.

BY HOWARD FIELDING.

Crowded close to the curb of Sixth avenue in the New York shopping district sat a beggar man on a rickety camp stool. He seemed to be 60 years old, but the poor age rapidly. He might have been much younger. A chilly wind went hurrying up the avenue, and it tossed the old man's white hair about his ears as he took off his battered hat and laid it appealingly in his lap.

On that side of the thoroughfare the breeze and the crowd were moving in the same direction, and they seemed to take about equal heed of the beggar's plight. Presently he began to sing an old time, sentimental ballad in a weak but not unmusical voice. The elevated railroad trains rumbled and roared, and the electric cars contributed the rattle of their wheels and the whining whir of their motive machinery, but the beggar was not to be discouraged by a discordant accompaniment or an unsympathetic audience. He sang his best despite all.

There was a pretty girl in the crowd who had an ear attuned to everything musical. She recognized some merit in the beggar's singing, and she paused to hear him. No one else paid the slightest attention to his music, and he received no alms until, just as the song was done, a robust and handsome young man dressed in good style approached and put some money into the hat.

"Heaven bless you, sir!" said the beggar. "This is the first penny I've had this day."

"Penny?" cried the young man. "Did I give you a penny? I thought it was a dime!" And he immediately began to fish for coins in the small pocket in his overcoat.

But the beggar hastened to explain that it wasn't a penny. What he had meant to say was that he hadn't had a penny before that.

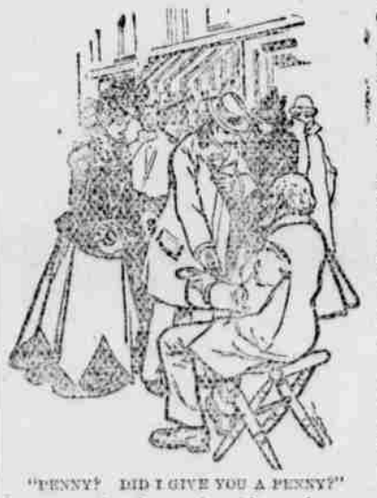
"Sing another song as well as you sang the last one and I'll give you a quarter," said the young man.

This colloquy had excited some attention, and a score of people were grouped in front of the beggar as he prepared to earn his fee. He sang "My Old Kentucky Home," and when he came to the chorus his benefactor supplied a tenor that was clear and sweet as the note of a flute.

The duet furnished by this strangely assorted pair would have found favor with a much more critical audience, but it was probably the unusual spectacle rather than the excellence of the music which impressed this knot of shopping women. The result, in the beggar's hat, must have been nearly $2, for the pretty girl who has been already mentioned enthusiastically started the collection with a half.

The beggar, evidently realizing that he had, as the slang phrase goes, struck a good thing, hastily started another old time negro melody, and as he did so he looked up out of the corner of his eye at the real cause of his prosperity, but the young man seemed to feel that he had attracted more attention than was agreeable, and he prepared for flight.

At this moment, however, he caught the eye of the pretty girl, and its glance was bent upon him appealingly. He stopped, hesitated a moment with flushed face, and then with an air of good humored recklessness stepped



"PENNY? DID I GIVE YOU A PENNY?"

back to the beggar's side and once more lent the gentle magic of his voice to the cause of charity.

He got through two verses and then fled; but as he passed the pretty girl he received his just reward, for she said "Thank you" very sweetly and just loud enough for him to hear. There was another glance between them. Then he lifted his hat and hurried away.

The pretty girl floated up the avenue with the tide of humanity, which presently swept her into a big dry goods store. She knew that she had intended to make a purchase there, but she couldn't remember what was the article desired. The only thing she could think of was a tenor voice, and if she had been searching for one in the stock of the store her wanderings from counter to counter could not have been more fruitless. She eventually left the place empty handed.

When she got home, the pretty girl related the adventure of the beggar to her mother, Mrs. Harriet Alston, widow of the banker and philanthropist, who died at Newport two years ago last summer. Mrs. Alston remarked that it must have been well worth seeing, but she thought her daughter shouldn't have spoken to the stranger.

"It won't do any harm, mother," replied pretty Mistress Anne in a tone not quite as cheerful as her ordinary, "I shall never see him again."

It was on Broadway near Grace church that a few days later Anne Alston again encountered the musical beggar. He was just planting his camp stool near the curb. She had a singular feeling of owing him something, and she walked hastily up and gave him a few small coins.

The old fellow looked despondent, and he was obviously suffering from a

"IT WOULD BE SO KIND OF YOU. HERE IS MY CARD."

severe cold, for the voice with which he gave thanks was very hoarse. One might have expected music like a crow's from him, yet he began a ballad quite tunefully.

Suddenly he tripped in the melody, and Anne saw that something had startled him. Following his glance, she beheld the young tenor coming along Tenth street westward. He saw the beggar when within 20 yards of the Broadway corner and seemed to have an impulse to avoid him. Then, like the good Samaritan, he decided not to pass by on the other side.

As he came up the beggar stopped singing.

"Well, Mr. O'Mara," said the young man cheerily, "how's the luck today?"

"Bad—very bad, your honor," replied the beggar. "Ah, I'll never see the likes of that day on Sixth avenue!"

"Oh, yes, you will!" was the reply. "But, I say, what's the matter with your voice?"

"I have the divvle's own cowld on me chist, savin the lady's prisince!" answered the beggar as he laid his hand upon the region of his trouble.

"You oughtn't to be out in this weather," said the young man, dropping his bantering manner and speaking in a tone of serious concern.

"It might ruin his voice forever," said Miss Alston, so much interested that she forgot to be conventional.

"I'm really afraid of it," said the young man, aside to her. "I believe I'll try to send the old fellow home for tonight at least."

He turned to the beggar.

"O'Mara," said he, "what'll you take to go home and stay there for two days?"

"I can't do it today, sir," was the reply. "The rent's to be paid, or out we all go."

"You have a family?" asked Anne.

"A wife and six children, ma'am," said he, "the oldest of tin."

A rather flashy young woman standing behind O'Mara laughed irreverently, and the tenor looked somewhat disturbed. But Anne saw nothing extraordinary in this statement, and she looked on the beggar with greatly increased pity.

"Suppose I give you $10," said she. "Will you agree not to sing upon the street again until your cold is better?"

"Heaven bless your kind young heart!" said the beggar. "Not a foot will I stir from me own fireside till I'm well ag'in, for it's me voice that's all I've got to keep the wolf from me chure."

Before the young man could restrain her—though he made a move to do so—she had taken a $10 bill from her purse and had put it into the beggar's hand. O'Mara, with many words of gratitude, picked up his stool and trudged away.

"I hope he is worthy of your great kindness," said the tenor with deep respect, "but I am afraid"—

He paused as if at a loss just how to express his doubts.

"Why do you think him undeserving?" asked Anne.

"I'm afraid," he replied gently, "that he was not telling the truth just now."

"About his wife and children?" said she. "Indeed he was. I saw his sincerity in his face. I shall find out more about him and send some things to his house for the children. Oh, why didn't I ask him where he lives? You know his name. Perhaps you can tell me where to find him."

The tenor hesitated a moment. Then he said earnestly:

"If you will permit me to do so, I will try to investigate this man's case thoroughly for you."

"Oh! Will you?" she cried. "It would be so kind of you. Here is my card. Please let me know about him as soon as you can."

In exchange for her card he gave her his, on which she read the name Douglass Wayne.

"I shall expect to see you tomorrow or the next day at the latest, Mr. Wayne," said she as they waited for a car which was to take her home.

He hesitated for a moment and seemed very much embarrassed.

"I could write," said he at last. "If it isn't convenient to have me call."

"Don't let that disturb you," said she. "You will call on a matter of business, and after we've settled that I hope you'll sing for me."

He tried to say something appropriate, but could only manage a "Goodday!" that was like a bashful schoolboy's.

On the following afternoon Mr. Wayne called upon Miss Alston, and she received him alone in a manner as unconventionally friendly as their earlier acquaintance had been. But no cordiality of welcome could put Mr. Wayne at his ease.

"It's a pitiful story I've got to tell you," said he.

"About our friend, Mr. O'Mara?" queried Anne.

"Yes; about our friend, Mr. O'Mara. I've looked him up, and he is entirely unworthy. In fact, he's a fraud."

"Isn't he really poor?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, he's poor enough!"

"Then why shouldn't I help him? A man of his years"—

"Ah, there's the point!" said Wayne. "He isn't really old. He's only 24, and"—

"Twenty-four! And with a wife and six children!"

"No; he hasn't any children, and he isn't married. His name isn't O'Mara either, and he's not an Irishman. He's Scott Barman, a vaudeville performer. He and his partner had been out of an engagement for several months, and their money was gone almost to the last cent. They had an engagement in sight, but it looked as if they would starve to death in the meantime. At this juncture the partner—a worthless fellow who ought to be something better, for he comes of a good family and was well brought up and educated—suggested this scheme of street beggary. They squared matters with the police in the usual way and, I understand, have made quite a bit of money."

"That's just too funny for anything!" exclaimed Anne. And she laughed like a child. "It's a great joke on me! That fellow must be dreadfully clever. The idea of his fooling me in broad daylight! I'm sure he's welcome to my money!"

"I forced him to return it," said Wayne, drawing the identical $10 bill from his pocket. "I was unwilling you should be robbed in that way."

"Robbed?" she cried. "Not a bit of it! I've had more than the money's worth, and I'd be very much obliged if you'd return it to him."

"I can't do that," he protested. "You see, it's not only that 'O'Mara' is a fraud, but there's his rascally partner, who"—

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Anne. "Tell me about the partner."

"Why, you see," said he, "the scheme they made up between them was that

ANNE GASPED FOR BREATH.

Barman should represent a poor old man, and that while he was singing to an unresponsive crowd the partner, dressed as a gentleman in the only good suit of clothes he has in the world, should come along and join in."

"Just as you did," said Anne. "Isn't that odd?"

"Yes," said he, looking at her a moment and then letting his head fall forward upon his breast; "just as I did."

Anne gasped for breath.

"You, you!" she cried. "You are— No; it isn't possible!"

"It is true," he replied, turning away from her. "I am the concert hall singer, Douglass Wayne, a profligate and a rascal; last of all, a beggar on the street, but not quite all a thief, for I couldn't steal your money. Here it is, the whole sum, so far as Barman and I can remember."

He laid the money on a table and hurried toward the door.

"Wait! Wait!" she called after him. "You have done nothing wrong. Let us talk of this. Perhaps I can do something to help you."

"No," said he, pausing on the threshold, "you don't want to know me, and, as for helping me, it's enough to have seen you—far more than I deserve to have been one minute your guest in your own home. Your class and mine are apart and ought to be. Goodby!"

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A week later Wayne and Barman, the celebrated musical comedy duo, appeared at a place of amusement where "refined vaudeville" perennially holds the boards. Barman was dressed as a tramp and Wayne as a dude, in which character he wore an enormous chrysanthemum in his buttonhole. On the second evening he wore a much larger and finer one—the very rarest chrysanthemum in New York—which had been sent to the stage door in a box, but there was no visible clew to the identity of the giver.

LIKED TO BE ON TIME.

SO MR. JOBSON TOLD MRS. JOBSON REGARDING THE THEATER.

And the Good Wife Was Inconsiderate Enough to Take Him at His Word, Much to His Disgust and Unqualified Amazement.

"Mrs. Jobson," said Mr. Jobson when he got home at 4:30 the other afternoon, "just let me take this early opportunity to remind you again that we're scheduled to go to the theater this evening. It is my desire and purpose to reach the theater in time to see the rise of the curtain on the first act, for once in the whole course of my married life, this evening. I want to see the beginning of the show. I was unable to get aisle seats, and I feel unwilling on this particular occasion to trample seven or eight unoffending men and women underfoot in order to reach my seat just 14 minutes after the performance has begun, when the orchestra is rendering shivery music and the abused and starving woman with the diamonds is narrating the history of her life. Nor do I feel resigned this evening to the spectacle of your completing your toilet on the street after we start. Just see if you can't toe out in time for us to make the break for the cars somewhere in the neighborhood of 7:30, and you'll do me a favor."

Mrs. Jobson smiled and superintended the setting of the table. The dinner passed off quietly. After dinner Mr. Jobson settled himself in his easy chair and buried himself in The Sun. Darkness began to creep on apace, as the lady novelists put it, and he illuminated the house. When he finished The Sun, he picked up the copy of "David Harum" that Mrs. Jobson had been reading and plunged into it.

"This is the stuff they've been making such a row about," muttered Mr. Jobson to himself when he sat down with the book, and in less than eight minutes he had read 12 pages of it and had forgotten his name and number. Mrs. Jobson had disappeared up stairs some time previously, but he didn't even hear her moving about in her dressing room. After awhile, however, she called him.

"It's getting late," she said. "Aren't you going to begin to dress?"

"Uh huh," replied Mr. Jobson, turning over a page. He had only an indistinct idea of what she was saying. Ten minutes later she called to him again.

"I am pretty nearly ready," she said, "and it's 7:30. Aren't you going to change your clothes?"

"Um-m, uh huh," answered Mr. Jobson, unconsciously digging into his pocket and pulling out another cigar, which he didn't light, but chewed on. He was too much engrossed with the book.

At 7:25 Mrs. Jobson tripped down stairs all ready. Even her gloves were buttoned.

"Well?" said she, smiling at Mr. Jobson.

"Huh?" he inquired, looking up at her. "Where are you going?"

"It seems to me that we had intended attending some theatrical performance this evening, had we not?"

Mr. Jobson surveyed her in a mystified way and then pulled out his watch.

"By jing, I believe there was something said about the theater this evening!" he exclaimed. "How's it happen that you're all ready? And why didn't you just tip me off, by the way, that it was time for me to be getting arrayed in purple and fine linen?"

"I called you several times," said Mrs. Jobson.

He laid the book down and regarded her severely.

"Called me several times, hey?" said he skeptically. "Mrs. Jobson, I don't claim to be getting any younger, like some people I know, but it's simply out of the question for you to attempt to make me believe that I'm as deaf as a post. Don't you suppose I could have heard you if you had leaned over the banisters, and talked above a whisper? But I see through your little game. Just because I happened to remind you this afternoon that it would be a good scheme for you to be ready on time you figured that it would be funny to sneak up stairs at about 5:30, walk around on tiptoe while you fixed up and permit me to doze off in my chair here. Just so's you could have it on me about not being ready myself. S'pose you thought that was a really subtle scheme and hard to see through, hey?"

And he went muttering up stairs to get ready. He found the buttons all placed in his shirt and everything laid out on the chairs, but still he muttered. Mrs. Jobson didn't stand in the hall and shout up to him, "Hey, there, are you going to be all night getting those duds on?" as Mr. Jobson would have done under reversed circumstances.

At 8:20 he clomped down stairs with his tie very much mussed and at one side, his hair parted in several different places and with the sanguinary marks of several cuts he had inflicted upon himself in shaving still showing quite prominently. They reached the theater at 8:40, and seven persons had to stand to let them pass to their seats. Mr. Jobson sat and watched the remainder of the play in gloomy silence. He didn't say a word on the way home. As he got a bee line on the bed, with his hand on the gas key, preparatory to putting out the lights, however, he addressed her thus:

"Mrs. Jobson, a joke's a joke, but a put up job is a different sort of proposition. You weren't cut out for a light comedienne. The next time you feel inclined to be funny just count up to 184 and take seven steps to the rear. That'll give you a chance to decide to pass up your elephantine manifestations of humor. By the time you learn your limitations you are liable not to have any husband, and he won't be in Oak Hill either."—Washington Star.

The Saleslady's Romance.

"Yes, I'm in the necktie department now. I like it ever so much better than selling ribbons. Men are so much easier to suit than women. All you've got to do is smile at them and you can sell them any old thing. The women will finger over the whole stock and not buy 10 cents' worth—just as if a lady had nothing to do but show goods. Besides, I don't like the floorwalker in the ribbon department. The one we've got now is lovely. His name is Perkins—Horatio Perkins—and he's just as swell.

"And, say, can you keep a secret? He's—you won't tell a soul?—well, he's in love with me. No, he hasn't said so yet, but I can tell by the way he looks at me—never takes his eyes off me from morning till night. He's jealous, too, and that's a sure sign. You ought to've seen him yesterday when George came in to invite me to the bill poster's ball. George—he's my old steady, you know—well, he and I was standing there talking when Horatio—I mean Mr. Perkins—came along. He gave me an awful fierce look, but I never let on that I seen him, but just kept right on talking.

"Then he stepped right up to me and says, his voice quivering with suppressed emotion, he says: 'Miss Robinson,' he says, 'are you aware that there are half a dozen customers waiting for you?'

"I know he only said that so as not to betray his real feelings, because when I turned around there wasn't any six customers there at all. There was only four."—New York Journal.

A Row at the Show.

The lord mayor's show is an annual theme for the newspapers. Very little can be said about it that has not been said again and again. It costs about £2,000, the banquet from £2,000 to £3,000. The show has sunk during the century to borrowing some of its splendors from the "property man." Thereby hangs a tale.

A certain lord mayor hired from the Surrey theater two suits of armor, brass and steel, with a couple of supers to go inside them. The manager of the Surrey stipulated, by the way, that the steel armor should not be used if the day be a wet or a foggy one. After the show the men in armor were taken to the Guildhall, remaining there several hours without food. No one, it appears, was able to rid them of their ironmongery.

Wine was given them, and the man of brass became intoxicated. The bystanders, thinking if he fell about that he would injure others as well as himself, tried to eject him. But he showed fight, and, to add to their further dismay, his companion in arms joined him. They were overcome at last only by sheer weight of numbers. Then the maker of the armor was sent for. He eventually succeeded in freeing the men, who were in danger of being stifled by the weight of their equipment.—Good Words.

Treating Insomnia.

So many people suffer from insomnia nowadays that it is a wonder they do not adopt the time honored custom of French kings and indeed of our ancestors generally, the "en cas" by the bedside, the meal of fruit or bread and cold chicken, put ready in case of wakefulness. Many a merry little meal might be eaten in the middle of the night, when thoughts crowd on the mind and care sits heavy. It is the wakeful digestion that claims its due and clamors to be fed. Our forefathers were wise, and many a hunter after old furniture knows the quaint little cupboard with a grated door which served for the night meal and is now sometimes labeled a cheese cupboard. A bedside book is of no use when the pangs of hunger make for mastery, but with a book and a "snack" one can contrive to pass some pleasant hours, even when sleep does not touch one's eyelids and the sweet boon of unconsciousness evades one's grasp.—New York Times.

They Don't Know Nerves.

Those who know the Chinese best have been particularly struck with their absence of nerves. The foreigner fidgets, the native sits still; balmy sleep, especially in hot weather, will resist the foreigner's sweetest wooing, while to the native lying on a heap of stones or across the bars of a wheelbarrow she comes as a matter of course; we need constant change and variety, they would find contentment and rest on the treadmill.

"It would be easy," says Mr. Smith, "to raise in China an army of 1,000,000 men—nay, 10,000,000—tested by competitive examination as to their capacity to go to sleep across three wheelbarrows, with heads downward, like a spider, their mouths wide open and a fly inside?"

From which it is evident, says The North China Herald, that in a crusade against noise we can hope for no assistance from our native fellow townsmen, but instead a great amount of vis inertiae, if not positive opposition.

A Chinese Dooley.

Two Irishmen stood at Gates avenue and Bedford street discussing a Chinese laundry sign.

"Kin ye say it, Pat?"

"Where?"

"There. Don't ye say it?"

"Oh, Oi do now."

"Well, they say a Chinaman's furst name is his last name. Do ye blave it, Pat?"

"Yis."

"Then rade it backward."

"But rade it furrud furst, an it spells Lee Dew."

"But rade it backward, man."

"D-e-w, Do; L-e-e, Le—Dooley."

"Roight ye are, Pat, an Dooley is a foine old Irish name, but it's the furst toime in me loife Oi iver heerd of a Chinese with an Oirish name. He ought to hang, the spalpeen."—New York Press.